

30 JAN 06

Dear Friends and Family of the Iron Eagle Brigade,

As January draws to an end, Task Force Eagle Soldiers can be proud of their accomplishments this month. Unfortunately, this week's poor weather conditions and lack of relief supplies limited the ability to transport optimal loads. These constraints, however, did not stop one Chinook aircrew from setting a new record by delivering 160,000 pounds in one day. The overall totals remain impressive: Aircrews have flown 4,717 accident-free hours, evacuated 3,740 casualties, and delivered 22,845,652 pounds of humanitarian assistance. Task Force Eagle has surpassed all expectations since the beginning of Operation Lifeline in October 2005.

Throughout the week, Task Force Eagle Soldiers participated in various morale-boosting events. We received visits from several groups of high-ranking military officials and dignitaries, including governors from Arkansas, Texas, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Additionally, many Soldiers huddled around the television during early morning hours and watched the Super Bowl playoffs. We sponsored another bazaar where Soldiers could purchase traditional clothing, handcrafted items, jewelry, and movies.

On 26 January, Task Force Eagle celebrated Australia Day. Like America's Independence Day, Australia Day is a time for citizens to celebrate their historical accomplishments, common values, and rich heritage. At Qasim Air Base, our Australian Soldiers demonstrated their national pride by posting Aussie flags and decorations throughout the Life Support Area and greeting us with a friendly, "Goodaye, mate!" For almost three hours in the afternoon sun, American and Australian Soldiers played a round-robin sports tournament, including volleyball, rugby and football, with six-member teams intermixed from both countries. Following the sporting events, the Aussies hosted a "down-under" style barbeque with plenty of good food and fellowship. The festivities ended with a ceremony where I had the honor of promoting four Australian Soldiers.

We are preparing the deployment of B Company, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. A group of Soldiers and Chinooks has already arrived safely, and we will soon send another group. Soldiers are working hard to break down their areas, load aircraft and equipment for movement, and finish required pre-deployment training, while simultaneously conducting humanitarian assistance missions.

Soldiers appreciate the letters and care packages from friends and loved ones. Thank you very much for continued prayers and support.

Respectfully,

COL Bob Johnson